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NEWSLETTER

May 2003

From The Desk Of The Secretary:

April has been a very busy month at the department. The April 15th deadline for future home site selections in Fresno and Redding have been met, the architectural drawing phase of the three homes in southern California draws near, and the Barstow Home SNF closure continues.

Working to meet a tight federal timeline through varying steps of the approval process for the construction of the five new veterans homes continues to be a challenge for the Capital Development and Construction Division. To date, the initial application for the Fresno and Redding homes have been submitted to the USDVA. Site selection for those new homes has been forwarded to the CDVA and is currently under review. The initial scope of the West L.A., Saticoy, and Lancaster homes have been approved by the Public Works Board and architectural design will begin soon. All of these elements are very time sensitive to securing federal approval in its next round of funding. In addition, the West L.A. site will soon undergo an environmental impact review that should provide input into the final architectural layout of that home in the community.

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GET READY, HERE COMES HIPAA

Ivann E. Greene

Agency HIPAA Coordinator

On April 14, 2003, new privacy policies under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) took effect. These new policies limit who may use, discuss, review, and transmit the Protected Health Information (PHI) of employees and families enrolled in health plans across the United States. CDVA takes privacy seriously, and these policies strengthen CDVA's commitment to maintaining confidentiality of PHI.

Under HIPAA, PHI is defined as confidential, personal, and identifiable health information about individuals created or received by a health plan, provider, or health care clearinghouse, and transmitted or maintained in any form. "Identifiable" means that a person reading this information could reasonably use it to identify an individual.

Although your job may not require you to routinely handle PHI, you may encounter it as you interact with your colleagues here at CDVA. Secretary Johannessen has commissioned the CDVA Office of HIPAA Implementation (CDVAOHI) to research, and prepare the necessary policies and procedures to bring CDVA in compliance with HIPAA.

As a result of CDVAOHI's charge to implement and be in compliance with HIPAA, Deborah Kania, Deputy Secretary for Veteran Homes, has ordered CDVAOHI to prepare the necessary federally mandated training modules for all CDVA personnel in the coming weeks and months. The first training module will be available in the next couple of days and is entitled HIPAA 100.

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CARING FOR AN ELDER VETERAN POPULATION

Charlene Keppler-Clark

*Medical Staff Quality Assurance Coordinator
Yountville Veterans Home*

The medical staff at the California Veterans Home at Yountville cares for approximately 1100 resident veterans whose average age is 79 years. Their guiding theme is "Patient Care Comes First."

To apply this theme in practice, the physicians are focusing on three areas:

1. Patient Education: Providing residents with knowledge can make a profound difference in a patient's attitude, motivation and choices.
2. Pain Management: Believing what the patient says about his/her pain is the first step. It is essential to effectively manage pain.
3. End-of-Life Care: This care is everyone's right and it is central to the quality of life and dignity.

This plan features five guiding principles:

1. Physicians will discuss and respect a resident's preference for treatment and care.
2. Every reasonable effort will be made to relieve pain and other undesirable physical symptoms.
3. Physicians will identify and address emotional, spiritual and personal suffering.
4. Physicians will provide realistic information regarding prognosis and the expected course of events preceding death.
5. Grieving will be acknowledged and supported.

Managing the problems of aging, such as pain, has many benefits and is on the cutting edge of today's medicine. The American Geriatrics Society, June 2002-Vol. 50, No. 6, Supplement to JAGS states, "The consequences of persistent pain among older people are numerous. Depression, anxiety, decreased socialization, sleep disturbance, impaired ambulation, and increased healthcare costs have all been found to be associated with the presence of pain in older people."

Yountville's End-of-Life Care program is being lauded

as one of the best plans that one surveyor for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has seen. The plan is being recommended for implementation elsewhere.

Yountville's medical team is putting patient care first and expects to enhance the quality and possibly the quantity of life. Wellness is stressed according to Dr. Aaen, the Home's Chief Medical Officer. "Through our quality assurance program, we are expanding opportunities to increase our residents' knowledge of prevention, health-enhancing lifestyles, medication and treatment options," stated Aaen. "For the Home's medical team, caring for the needs of veterans comes first," concluded Aaen.

CALIFORNIA'S VETERANS HONORED AT INTERNATIONAL WORLD PEACE ROSE GARDEN AT CAPITOL

On Wednesday, April 23, the California Department of Veterans Affairs and the International World Peace Rose Gardens honored veterans of all wars by planting "Purple Heart," "Silver Star," and "Bronze Star" roses just a few feet from the California Vietnam War Memorial in Capitol Park.

Veterans chosen at random whom had earned these commendations assisted with the planting of these roses. In addition, three other roses named World War II, Desert Peace, and Veterans Honor were also planted.

A couple hundred people came together to observe this honor bestowed on our country's veterans. Among them were fellow veterans, their friends and families, and CDVA employees. Not a single dry eye was visible during parts of this historic ceremony, especially when the Folsom Harmony Express Men's Chorus sang a heartfelt rendition of the Star Spangled Banner.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs K. Maurice Johannessen stated, "It is an honor and an obligation to recognize our country's veterans for answering the call to defend our freedom when the occasion made it necessary. These men and women put themselves in harms way while upholding the ideals of freedom and respect for humanity for all the peoples of the world. It is only fitting that they now be recognized with a tribute which will stand and grow every year, and whose roses will remind everyone that peace needs to be tended too and not taken for granted."

NEWS FROM CHULA VISTA

John Smith

Public Information Officer
Chula Vista Veterans Home

We continue to admit new residents to our skilled nursing facility (SNF) at a steady pace, averaging four admissions per week. Since last month's newsletter, we have accepted seventeen new SNF residents into our facility, raising our SNF census to 81. Sixteen of these new veterans are transfers from our sister facility in Barstow.

*When you add a daily view of an ocean sunset,
you have the natural conditions for an easy
adjustment period.*

For the most part, the residents arriving from Barstow are adjusting to their new surroundings very well. One common concern, expressed by most of them, is becoming acclimated to the cooler weather here in Chula Vista. In general, San Diego County has some of the best year-round weather in America.

The Veterans Home of California-Chula Vista is located on the top of a hill with a beautiful view of the Pacific Ocean. Because of this fact, we experience a breeze that comes in from the west on most afternoons. At this time of year the breeze can be very cool. However, during the warm months of Spring, Summer, and Fall, the breeze warms up and brings with it a refreshing coolness containing just the right scent of salt water from the Pacific Ocean. When you add a daily view of an ocean sunset, you have the natural conditions for an easy adjustment period.

Having said that, we recognize that having to accept change to their normal routine can be difficult for our elderly veterans. Therefore, our staff is doing all we can to assist them with the transition of moving from the inland desert environment of Barstow, to the Southern California coastal community of San Diego. Our Director of the SNF Activity Department met with these new residents to acquaint them with the different kinds of activities that are available in San Diego County. For example, over the years we have developed a great relationship with many of the local professional sports teams.

During the football season, we receive complimentary tickets to many of the home games of the San Diego Chargers. At this time of year, during the baseball season, the San Diego Padres provide our resident veterans with complimentary tickets for many of their regularly scheduled baseball games. Some of the new veterans from Barstow will be attending these games over the next few months. Next year, the city of San Diego will open the newest baseball park in America. The Padres have promised not to forget the residents of our Veterans Home during next year's season long celebration. Go Padres!

In other news, in order to accommodate the increased demand for medical services caused by the transfer of Barstow residents, our Veterans Home is in the process of hiring 21 Certified Nursing Assistants, two Licensed Vocational Nurses, one Registered Nurse, and one Supervising Registered Nurse

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HERE COMES HIPAA

HIPAA 100 will provide a brief overview of what HIPAA is all about.

In addition, all CDVA employees, stakeholders, and volunteers will soon receive a Notice of Privacy Practices (NPP) that details the use of PHI and the rights relating to such information. When this material becomes available, please take the time and review it. Keeping the NPP as a resource document would be a good idea as well.

If you have any questions about HIPAA, our new privacy policies, or what you need to do or will be doing, please don't hesitate to contact Ivann Greene, Agency HIPAA Coordinator, at 916.503.8388 or email CDVAOHI at CDVAOHI@cdva.ca.gov.

HIPAA is here at CDVA!!!

NEWS FROM YOUNTVILLE

Col. Dick Hum and the Lost Soviet MIG 25

Lynn Scott

*Public Information Officer
Yountville Veterans Home*

On September 6, 1976, a top Russian experimental pilot, Lt. Viktor Belenko, veered off course while on a routine training flight in a MIG 25 (Foxbat) to freedom in the West. He landed on the Japanese island of Hokkaido with barely 30 seconds of fuel left—a defector with one of Russia's newest military weapons. There begins the story of one of the greatest military secrets stolen from the Soviets and delivered into America's lap.

Central in this story is the part played by one of the members of Veterans Home of California in Yountville—retired Air Force Colonel Dick Hum, a 32-year active duty veteran who was Commander, 7602nd Air Intelligence Group, the sole Air Force human intelligence unit at the Pentagon level. Hum, as Commander, was the Executive Agent of the Defense Department in charge of debriefing the defector, Lt. Belenko. Debriefing of defectors are always performed by the CIA, but in this case an exception was made since Hum's Director of Operations, Col. George Wish, was a fighter pilot fresh from Viet Nam and was able to establish a close rapport with the defector—both being fighter jocks. George was also a fluent Russian speaker.

The importance of the MIG 25 to the United States was highlighted by the fact that the U.S. Air Force, up to that time in 1976, had in its possession a MIG 17 and MIG 19; had considerable information on the MIG 21 and limited information on the MIG 23. The newest generation of MIGs produced by the Soviets was the MIG 25, of which the U.S. had virtually no information on its capabilities.

The presence of the aircraft in the hands of the Japanese and the access to its defector pilot presented a phenomenal intelligence opportunity to the United States.

It so happened that Hum's organization had intelligence detachments in different parts of the world, and one of the largest units was in Japan. The detachment was given the job of safeguarding the aircraft and exploiting it along with the Japanese and

and Air Force Research and Development specialists. This was a 24/7 operation since everyone was uncertain how long the Japanese would be able to withstand the tremendous diplomatic pressure exerted by the Soviets for the return of their aircraft.

George Wish had to work with Lt. Belenko at all times of the day and night in an effort to locate and defuse the bombs which were hidden; implanted in critical parts of the aircraft (to prevent exploitation by an enemy). The coordinated joint operation was highly successful—not a person was injured and various parts of the aircraft were rapidly airlifted to the US for examination and then immediately returned. Belenko supplied the crucial information of the plane's capabilities and limitations. They discovered that the MIG 25 was designed to shoot-down the U.S. spy plane called "The Blackbird." Because of this operation, the U.S. obtained invaluable intelligence which otherwise may have taken 10 to 15 years to obtain—an intelligence coup in the extreme. The Russians did get their plane back—all in pieces, carefully packed in a number of large crates.

For the above effort, Colonel Hum was awarded the Certificate of Distinction by the National Intelligence Committee.

Our veterans homes are filled with fascinating stories—often overlooked—that have made a difference in the fight for freedom. In the Veterans Home's Oral History Program at Yountville, we strive to uncover and share stories that have made a difference.

California Veterans Homes Statistics

Total census as of 5/05/03

Barstow – Total 224

**Domiciliary – 113
Intermediate Care – 42
Skilled Nursing – 69**

Chula Vista – Total 291

**Domiciliary – 155
Assisted Living (RCFE) – 51
Skilled Nursing – 85**

Yountville – Total 1071 (2 Acute Care)

**Domiciliary – 638
Assisted Living (RCFE) – 82
Intermediate Care – 137
Skilled Nursing Care – 212**

From The Desk Of The Secretary:

Coinciding with the new homes project, the Yountville Home itself has four projects in the works. All four projects, the largest being an Alzheimer's Unit, have been approved by the Public Works Board with architectural drawings underway.

The Homes Division continues in its process to transfer SNF residents from Barstow to Chula Vista and Yountville. Thus far, twenty-six residents have been relocated, 20 to Chula Vista and 6 to Yountville. The process, as indicated at the start, may take anywhere from three to six months to complete depending on availability of beds at the other two homes.

In addition to work proceeding in the homes area, the department was also able to take time to honor our veterans. On April 23, the Department held a rose planting ceremony here on the Capitol Park grounds. The International Rose Peace Gardens organization was kind enough to offer us the first planting of six rosebushes with veteran and military names designated by the growers. On April 30th, at the close of our Commanders Symposium at Headquarters, the Commanders and myself joined Governor Gray Davis at the California Veterans Memorial, once again in Capitol Park, to place a wreath in remembrance of those Californians lost in "Operation Iraqi Freedom". Major General Daniel Gibson, Commander of the California Air National Guard, read the names of 40 individuals who lost their lives during the military operation in Iraq.

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As we continue toward what looks to be some very busy months ahead, I thank you for your help thus far and ask for your continued support and good work as we take this department to a new level of service to our veterans.

K. Maurice Johannessen
Secretary of Veterans Affairs

"Branches of Honor" program initiated by Lieutenant Governor Bustamante:

In an effort to ensure that California's war heroes are not forgotten, Lieutenant Governor Cruz M. Bustamante conceived the "Branches of Honor" program to provide memorial trees to California families that have lost a relative in the war against Iraq.

"Branches of Honor" has enlisted the participation of the California National Guard, California Conservation Corp, and Home Depot. Home Depot has generously joined the effort and will take the lead role in working with families to provide them with commemorative trees. Trees will be donated at the request of any family who has lost a relative in the line of duty in the war with Iraq.

The first tree was donated to Rosa and Mario Gonzalez, the parents of Marine Corporal Jorge Gonzalez, who died in combat on March 23. Gonzalez is survived by his wife Jazty and an infant son, Alonso, who was born on March 3 at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Gonzalez graduated from El Monte High School in 2000, before joining the Marine Corp., and his parents chose to plant the tree at his high school alma mater.

"We are remembering California's heroes by showing our respect for their courage and by honoring their sacrifice," said Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante. "A tree is symbolic of life, and each of these living memorials will represent the life that a soldier gave in the name of freedom."

Home Depot has provided a toll-free phone line for families who wish to request a tree (1-800-654-1915, extension 8000).